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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002813

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: CUD LEADERS EXPLORING FUTURE OF PARTY AT  
HOME AND ABROAD

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Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION DEBORAH MALAC FOR REASON 1.4(D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Since their pardon and release from prison in July and August, the members of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) Supreme Council have begun actively working to reestablish themselves as the recognized leadership of the CUD. After nearly two years in prison, the former leaders of the CUD party wasted little time after their release, almost immediately restarting the regular meetings of the CUD Supreme Council. Many of these meetings were held in conjunction with the leaders of the reformed Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP), who had in 2005 elected to take their seats in the federal parliament. Before taking control of the CUDP again, however, the CUD leaders must address the divide among the current legal party leadership. Until then, they remain populist leaders with no political platform from which to operate.

¶2. (C) After initial domestic reengagement, much of the top leadership departed for a tour of the CUD diaspora strongholds around the world. Many of the top leaders, including former firebrand and party leader Hailu Shawel, chose to visit the U.S. There they will focus on solidifying financial links with supporters and repairing rifts that developed in the CUD diaspora leadership while they were in prison. The Ambassador has stressed to the departing CUD leaders the importance of a constructive diaspora role in Ethiopian politics and avoiding a return to the 2005 post-election conflict. Even if they discover they have the same level of support they had in 2005, Hailu Shawel and the other Supreme Council leaders have a long road ahead to truly secure control of this fragmented party after spending two years facing political trials. END SUMMARY.

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CUD LEADERS TO REESTABLISH INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
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¶3. (SBU) One of the CUD leaders' first strategies since being released from prison was to organize an extensive "world tour" by the former detainees, with the goal of reaching out to diaspora followers and party leadership. Several members of the Supreme Council were assigned to visit South Africa, Kenya, Australia, Europe, Canada and the U.S. Most of the

top leadership elected to visit the U.S., including party leader Hailu Shawel, Addis Ababa mayor-elect Berhanu Nega, and federal parliamentarians Yacob Hailemariam, Birtukan Mideksa, Gizachew Shiferaw, Hailu Araya and Biruk Kebede. They applied in separate groups for reinstatement of LPR status (Berhanu and Yacob) or B-1 visas (all others). Hailu was the last of this group to receive his visa, which was granted on September 7. In separate meetings with Ambassador, Pol-Econ counselor and Poloff prior to their departure, the CUD leaders explained that they would be touring various CUD strongholds throughout the U.S. to speak to followers, reestablish financial links with diaspora supporters and work to address the divide in the diaspora CUD. Stops are scheduled in Washington D.C., Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago and New York.

¶4. (SBU) Though the degree of their popular support was never in doubt, it was clearly demonstrated by the estimated 5,000 supporters that turned out to welcome their arrival at Dulles airport on September 9. Similarly, their domestic support does not appear to have waned either. During their visits to Post's consular section, they were approached and congratulated by nearly every LES, an event they report as typical when they appear in public.

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THE STRUGGLE TO KEEP THE NAME CUD  
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¶5. (SBU) In addition to addressing support from domestic and international followers, another major challenge currently facing the CUD is internal party matters. Although the CUD continued to function in parliament while the leadership was in jail, albeit reconstituted under a new name (CUDP) and with the leaders outside of jail, it is unclear whether those detained and those that remained free agree on the future of the party. Many of those who took their seats in parliament

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feel that they made an equally important sacrifice for the party by continuing to engage the GoE and feel slighted by supporters and the international community for being viewed as less relevant than the jailed CUD. Though the CUDP leaders have publicly stated that they plan to hand the reins of the party back over to the released detainees, they have privately told Emboffs that it is so far unclear what the future structure of the party will be, noting that they have no intention of giving up control of the party entirely. Though several joint meetings have been held, there has been no decision on how a reconstituted party leadership will be formed.

¶6. (SBU) Even if the matter of party leadership were settled, another fundamental challenge prohibits them from controlling the CUDP--none of the released detainees are members of this party. They can only be considered for membership once a CUDP party congress is officially held and recognized by the National Election Board (NEB). Furthermore, technically speaking, the CUD no longer exists. As explained by the head of party registration at the NEB, Mekonnen Wondimu, the released detainees are officially members of their former parties (Rainbow, All Ethiopia Unity Party, Ethiopian Democratic League, United Ethiopian Democratic Party-Medhin) that formed the coalition CUD solely for the 2005 elections. However, the released detainees have publicly declared their former parties as "dead," leaving themselves somewhat at the mercy of the current CUDP leadership.

¶7. (C) Despite having applied to form a new party in early 2006, the CUDP has yet to be certified by the NEB due to intra-party fighting between Chairman (and federal MP) Temesgen Zewdie and Vice-Chairman (and Addis Ababa city council member-elect) Ayele Chamisso. Though they had close working relations at the outset of the party's formation, a power struggle soon erupted with Ayele attempting to wrestle control from Temesgen. Many opposition members believe that

Ayele adopted this strategy after being co-opted by the GoE. Indeed he did take a markedly more cooperative position toward GoE policies after diverging from the Temesgen-controlled portion of the party. Though Ayele continues to maintain some support, this comes mostly from lower-level party members. All of the CUDP federal parliamentarians side with Temesgen.

¶8. (SBU) To date, a CUDP party congress has not been held. However, the leadership of the (former) CUD Supreme Council has been working with both Temesgen and Ayele to arrange this meeting. Once this is done, the leadership of the CUDP can elect to name all of the CUD leaders as members, and presumably as Executive Council members. However, if the party congress is not held, the NEB holds the right to dissolve the CUDP if the application for party registration was not confirmed with a party congress. In this case, the only option would be to form yet another party, though the leadership has stated that this is not preferable, since the CUD name is of critical importance.

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COMMENT: COMING MONTHS CRITICAL FOR RELEASED CUD LEADERS  
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¶9. (C) In the past, the CUD diaspora had been split not only by petty power struggles, but also in approaches in how to engage the GoE in political opposition. Some groups encourage engagement, while others encourage the leadership to take a more "by any means necessary" stance. In meetings with CUD leaders before their post-release tour of the U.S., Ambassador Yamamoto stressed the importance of engaging with the moderate diaspora CUD and working to quell the fiery rhetoric from the hardliners. Hailu Shawel, who had been most subjugated by the hardliners in the pre- and post-2005 election period, is on this tour of the U.S., but his primary concern is getting medical treatment in New York for a variety of health issues. Though he likely remains the most popular opposition political figure among the diaspora, it is uncertain whether he will reengage to the degree he did during the election period. Post encourages the Department to meet with the CUD leaders during their trip to field their viewpoints and to reiterate the need for constructive opposition on the part of the CUD. A return the pre-election

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rhetoric could easily result in the CUD leaders rearrest.

¶10. (SBU) Once they return home, the CUD leaders will face a difficult chore of reuniting the divided camps of the CUDP. This will be necessary, however, if they intend to keep the name CUDP and not have to form another new party, a task the GoE would likely make as difficult as possible for the released leaders. Meanwhile the CUDP leaders that had taken their seats in parliament will struggle to maintain a degree of respect among followers and to continue to hold a leadership position in a potentially reunited party. While the international community has praised them for active, legal political engagement, the heart of CUD followers still remains with the released leaders, who are riding a wave of support for their sacrifice.  
YAMAMOTO